

PREFACE

THE material presented in this book was collected by my late husband, Godfrey Wilson, and myself, between 1934 and 1938; he then being a Fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation, and I a Research Fellow of the International African Institute. Godfrey Wilson was in the field from September 1934 to December 1935 (with one month's break) and again from September 1936 to January 1938; the interval having been spent in London, digesting material. I did not begin work until March 1935, and was invalided out of the Territory with malaria for six months in 1937, so that I only spent a total of twenty months in the field. We had three main centres of work: Mwaya on the Lake-shore plain, Isumba in Selya, and Ilolo on the plateau near the Moravian mission of Rungwe; and either together or singly we stayed for some time in Kinga country on the Livingstone mountains, in Ngonde, at Lubaga, near LiKyala, at the White Fathers' station of Makete, on the Lupa gold-fields, in the Government station of Tukuyu, and at the Church of Scotland mission station, Livingstonia (Kondowe), to which youths from Ngonde and a few from Nyakyusa go to be educated (cf. Maps II and III). At one time or another we walked through almost all the district except for the Ndali hills: that expedition, long planned, was repeatedly prevented by attacks of malaria. At Mwaya and Isumba we were lent disused mission houses close to villages; in Ilolo we lived in a Nyakyusa-style house built for us in the main thoroughfare of the village; when camping we pitched our tent within the village usually near the homestead of the chief or headman.

As will be seen, the Nyakyusa are an extremely democratic people, and we lived in democratic fashion with Nyakyusa dropping in to visit, and sharing with us tea, or occasionally more solid meals, at all times of the day. We in turn were welcomed and fed in our friends' houses. After the first few months the atmosphere was extremely cordial, and the Nyakyusa took immense pains to explain their customs and to invite us to events which they thought would interest us. We both learnt to speak Nyakyusa and took notes largely in the language.

usa. It is true that one still meets blacksmiths on the outskirts of the villages or some distance away from them (as in the case of the Ndali tribe, western to the Nyakyusa area), but they no longer smelt the iron from ore mined by themselves as in former times. The smith of to-day remelt only scrap iron from disused motor-cars and other machines into tools, hatches, and spear-heads, unless, of course, the natives prefer to buy imported iron-ware. As with the Chaga, also the Nyakyusa smith can only be persuaded to submit to being photographed after long negotiation and a change into better clothes. The blacksmiths I met in the Bundali Mountains, however, made no objections whatever to being photographed at their work. Also women were allowed to attend. But one feature of the ancient Nyakyusa blacksmith's culture has been preserved till the present day: the lower part of the bellows through which the air blast is driven into the fire is still made of wood. This feature has been defined by H. Baumann as an element of the "ancient nigritic culture".

12. Dress. The cloths of the Nyakyusa have changed to a very considerable degree since the beginning of European influence. A comparison of the earliest pictures and descriptions of inhabitants at the northern end of Lake Nyasa with the dress of modern times brings out this point most forcibly. Originally the Nyakyusa went almost naked, adorned only with rings and belts, but nowadays all degrees of compromise with European fashions of dress are to be found, especially near the European settlements and Mission Stations. The most conservative element are, in this case, the women. It is still possible to-day to observe in each village the preparation of the long strips of bark (elyabi, pl. amabi) commonly worn by the women. The so-called *impandapanda* (Fotheringham: *mlambe*) tree furnishes the dress material. After the bark has been immersed in water, the bast is beaten with wooden instruments and then pulled off from the harder parts of the bark. These tools are like hammers; the flat end of such an implement is furrowed, sometimes with a disk made of horn, and as it produces patters on the bast it is called "obosimbe", that which produces patters. These long belts, almost reaching the ground, especially in front, are mostly ruby coloured, but the women sitting in front of their huts manufacture also other types with geometrical (triangular) patterns in yellow and brown forming only girdles (*umpango*). In addition to this minimum requirement in the way of dress some women around the waist also wear copper belts (*manyeta*), made of thin copper-wire, spirally wound on a core of hairs from the tails of cows. These